

To: Enck, Judith[Enck.Judith@epa.gov]
From: Mears, Mary
Sent: Fri 2/26/2016 10:50:29 PM
Subject: FW: Information on Hoosick Falls

Sent. I am heading out soon.

Mary Mears

Deputy Director Public Affairs and Chief Public Outreach Branch

U.S. EPA Region 2 (NJ, NY, PR, the US VI and eight Indian Nations)

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From: Mears, Mary
Sent: Friday, February 26, 2016 5:47 PM
To: 'McKinley, Jesse' <jemcki@nytimes.com>
Subject: Information on Hoosick Falls

Hi Jesse,

Below is lots of information related to your email inquiry and our conversation.

Background on Hoosick Falls:

In response to concerns about PFOA levels in drinking water in Hoosick Falls, NY, EPA recommended that until a treatment system is in place at the public water supply and confirmed to be consistently removing PFOA to acceptable levels, the public should not drink water from the Hoosick Falls public water supply or use it for cooking, but rather, should use the free bottled water that was being made available.

Saint-Gobain, whose manufacturing plant is the suspected source of the contaminant in the water wells, is currently paying for the leasing, installation and maintenance of the water filtration system.

In addition, EPA recommended that people in the Town of Hoosick and the Village of Hoosick Falls who have private wells at which PFOA has been found to be present at a level greater than 100 parts per trillion not use that water for drinking or cooking, and instead use bottled water. And that those with private wells that have not yet been tested for the presence of PFOA ask the New York State Department of Health to test their well and, in the meantime, use bottled water.

EPA's advice was a result of specific circumstances that existed in that community, including the fact that: 1) free bottled water was already being made available to everyone in the community; and 2) the state health department had already offered to test, for PFOA, the private well of everyone in the Town who requested such testing. EPA's recommendation was also based on site specific information as well as information in the most recent EPA report on PFOA toxicity which underwent external peer review in August, 2014.

Background on PFOA:

PFOA is a contaminant that is still being studied. EPA is working closely with states and local communities to collect data on any communities with PFOA in their drinking water and to address those issues because each water system is unique and conditions vary from community to community.

EPA is currently working to update and prepare a lifetime Health Advisory for PFOA that will supersede its provisional health advisory when it is released this spring.

Health Advisories identify the concentration in drinking water at which adverse health effects are not anticipated to occur over an entire lifetime or shorter periods of exposure. They provide federal, state, local and tribal governments with non-regulatory guidance to make decisions in cases involving an unregulated contaminant. As part of this effort, the agency's most recent report on PFOA toxicity underwent independent external peer review in August 2014.

To further strengthen our drinking water systems across the country, investments in infrastructure and wastewater systems are also needed. Systemic challenges to America's water infrastructure – which is aging and underfunded - put our country's drinking water at risk. Collaboration with states, local communities, and tribal partners is essential to attract the important public and private investments our nation needs to protect our drinking water systems moving forward.

Background on TSCA Reform and New Chemicals Program:

EPA has taken numerous significant actions over the past two decades to reduce the public's exposure to PFOS and PFOA, including a voluntary phaseout effort for both chemicals, but these chemicals are examples of the more than 60,000 chemicals that were in commerce when TSCA passed in 1976. The statute, while imposing some review requirements for new chemicals entering the market, "grandfathered" in the existing chemicals, thus providing EPA with very limited ability to require testing on those existing chemicals to determine if they are safe or to move quickly to take action if they pose a risk. EPA continues to support much needed legislative reform to ensure that the Agency has updated authority to more effectively assess and regulate potentially harmful chemicals and ensure the American public that the chemicals used in the products they buy and use are safe

Under the TSCA New Chemicals program, EPA reviews new chemicals before they can enter the marketplace. If EPA does not have enough information to adequately review or identifies potential risks, the agency can take a range of actions to address concerns, including a ban or restriction, requirements for new testing and worker protection requirements. To date, EPA has reviewed over 300 PFOA and PFOS alternatives. After review, about seven percent of the submissions were approved with no requirement for action. This demonstrates EPA's on-going commitment to protect the public and the environment from chemical risks.

Background on NY state:

New York State has the primary role in implementing its drinking water program. It has experience in dealing with drinking water contaminants and understands the nature of health advisories. Because PFOA had been detected in the public water supply in Hoosick Falls at more than 600 ppt, EPA recommended that until a New York State Department of Health-approved treatment system is in place at the public water supply and confirmed to be consistently removing PFOA to acceptable levels, the public should not drink water from the Hoosick Falls public water supply or use it for cooking.

EPA discussed these recommendations with the state and has been working closely with them.

Background on EPA Involvement with Hoosick Falls:

Our direct involvement developed last fall and at that time the EPA was given data from samples taken in June from wells with levels over our provisional health advisory level. At that time, we took action and have been working with the state ever since. The state and county agencies have the lead in working with the Village on its water supply system. The Village has installed and experts will test a temporary granular activated carbon treatment system that should be effective in removing PFOA from the water. A permanent treatment system is being designed as well. In addition, New York has announced that it will test private wells and install "Point of Entry" treatment systems (known as POETs) in every residence in the Town of Hoosick, upon request. New York also committed to looking for an alternative drinking water source for Hoosick Falls for the long term.

Background on Health Info:

Long-chain PFCs are found world-wide in the environment, wildlife, and humans. They are bioaccumulative in wildlife and humans, and are persistent in the environment. They are toxic to laboratory animals and wildlife, producing reproductive, developmental, and systemic effects in laboratory tests.

To date, significant adverse effects have not been found in the general human population. However, given the long half-life of these chemicals in humans (years), it can reasonably be anticipated that continued exposure could increase body burdens to levels that would result in adverse outcomes. <http://www.epa.gov/assessing-and-managing-chemicals-under-tsca/long-chain-perfluorinated-chemicals-pfcs>

Websites:

EPA/Hoosick Falls: <http://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/hoosick-falls-water-contamination>

Scientific peer review of PFOA to develop lifetime health advisory:
<https://peerreview.versar.com/epa/pfoa/>

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